

County of Loudoun
Department of Planning
MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 18, 2009

TO: Nicole Steele, Project Manager, Land Use Review

FROM: Pat Giglio, Planner, Community Planning

SUBJECT: SPEX 2008-0061, SPEX 2008-0062 & CMPT 2008-0020
White's Ford Park, 2nd Referral

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) is requesting a pair of Special Exceptions (SPEXs) and a Commission Permit (CMPT) for the establishment of a public park on a 275-acre property with Potomac River frontage located southeast of Lucketts. The subject property is zoned AR-1 (Agriculture Rural-1) and is governed under the provisions of the Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance. The proposed regional park would be programmed for passive recreational uses and will feature hiking trails, equestrian trails, camping and cabin facilities, picnic pavilions, and a boat launch with concessions. Many of the proposed passive uses are permitted by-right within the zoning district, however the proposed camping facilities (up to 100 campsites) requires a Minor Special Exception and the boat launch with concessions requires a Special Exception within the zoning district. A Commission Permit is also required for the overall use of the property for a public park.

The applicant has responded to Community Planning's first referral and several issues remain outstanding issues are discussed below. These issues should be addressed to ensure that the policies and intent of the Revised General Plan are being met with the proposed project. This referral supplements the first referral dated July 13, 2009.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES

A. COMPATIBILITY

The policies of the Revised General Plan support the establishment of uses in the Rural Policy Area that preserve the rural character of the landscape, that are compatible with the dominant rural agricultural land use pattern, and that promote opportunities for the expansion of the County's rural economic as well as environmental goals (Revised General Plan, Chapter 7, Rural Economy Policies, Policy 1). The Plan identifies private camps and parks as an appropriate use in the Rural Policy Area (Revised General Plan,

Chapter 7, Land Use Pattern and Design Strategy Policies, Policy 6). The Plan also outlines a series of performance standards that all rural business uses should meet in order to ensure that the scale and intensity of the use is compatible with the rural character of the area (Revised General Plan, Chapter 7, Land Use Pattern and Design Strategy Policies, Policy 6). The Plan specifically identifies traffic capacity limits, site design standards (i.e. buffering, use intensity, siting, architectural features) and threats to public health, safety and welfare as performance standards which must be evaluated when reviewing applications within the Rural Policy Area (Revised General Plan, Chapter 7, Land Use Pattern and Design Strategy Policies, Policy 6).

The general use of the subject property as a regional park is consistent with the land use and rural economic policies of the Revised General Plan. In the first referral, staff had requested detailed information pertaining to the number of daily visitors, campers and the types of activities being proposed on the subject property so that the scale and intensity of the uses and their potential impact on the surrounding area and road network could be further evaluated.

Boat launch and Concessions/Boat Rental Facility

The proposed boat launch and concessions/boat rental facility as outlined in the applicant's original statement of justification would provide kayak and canoes rentals on a seasonal basis. The concession/boat rental facility would be located adjacent to the proposed boat launch and would be less than 840 square feet in size, which is permitted by-right in the floodplain per the Zoning Ordinance. The Revised General Plan specifically identifies "swimming and boating (non-powered)(where specific points of entry have been identified)" as a permitted active recreational use within the County's rivers and streams (Revised General Plan, Chapter 5, River and Stream Corridor Resources Policies, Policy 18i). However, the applicant's response to first referrals state that a small percentage of patrons to the park may be launching their own motorized fishing boats. The use of motorized boats on the County's rivers and stream is not supported by Plan policies.

Staff recommends that a condition of approval be developed to prohibit the launching of motorized boats from the subject property in conformance with Plan policies.

Campground and Facilities

The applicant is applying for a Level II campground as defined by the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance, which permits up to 100 campsites and 16,000 square feet of related structures. The applicant envisions "approximately 60 individual campsites, 10 cabins and several group camping areas", in addition the applicant may be providing accommodations for RV and travel trailer camping as implied by their response to first referral comments to the Office of Transportation Services (OTS). The performance standards of the Plan do not support Recreation Vehicles (RV) and/or large travel trailer camping on the subject property due to safety concerns and access constraints associated with the existing road network, noise associated with generators and the

requirements for waste pump out facilities often required for these types of self-contained camping vehicles. Additionally the proposed cabins which are to be located west of Hibler Road (Route 656) should be scaled and sited to maintain a coherent relationship to each other and the surrounding landscape. The overall layout and design of the proposed campgrounds, cabins and associated restroom facilities should respect and preserve the rural character and scenic quality of the subject property.

Staff recommends that a condition of approval be developed to prohibit Recreation Vehicles (RV) and/or large travel trailer camping on the subject property because of safety and access constraints associated with the existing road network and the infrastructure demands associated with these types of self contained camping vehicles which are not in conformance with the performance standards of the Plan.

Staff recommends that the overall layout and design of the proposed campgrounds, cabins and associated restroom facilities be scaled and sited to respect and preserve the rural character and scenic quality of the subject property.

B. HISTORIC RESOURCES

The County has developed specific policy for the protection and preservation of historic resources. The policy outlines the County's commitment to protecting structures and other features of particular historical significance in the context of their natural settings while working with landowners to convey the historic value of the resource to the community at large (Revised General Plan, Chapter 5, Historic and Archaeological Resources, Policy 8). The policy actively promotes the retention and adaptive re-use of historic structures as part of any new development application (Revised General Plan, Chapter 5, Historic and Archaeological Resources, Policy 9).

The historic Lloyd Fry House (also identified as the Colonel White House) and farm complex (VDHR 053-0012-0082) is comprised of buildings dating from the nineteenth and twentieth-century, some of which are associated with the Civil War history of the subject property. The applicant is planning to use the house as a residence for employees and the farm complex as a maintenance facility for the park initially and later rehabilitate the house as an interpretative center for the regional park. In the first referral, staff recommended that the applicant develop a rehabilitation plan for the house and farm complex, as well as a stabilization and mothballing plan for those historically significant buildings not being initially utilized. The applicant has outlined the goals and objectives of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) and their commitment to the preservation of natural and historic resources on the subject site, but has not provided any specific commitments. The applicant states that the "house and associated farm buildings are outside of the area and scope of the special exception" and "does not feel that a cultural resource management plan for the proposed park is necessary". While staff recognizes NVRPA's commitment to preservation, there are no

assurances that the existing buildings will be properly stabilized, mothballed and maintained for future use within the park.

The Lloyd Fry House (also identified as the Colonel White House) and farm complex (VDHR 053-0012-0082) are an important historic feature of the subject property and should be properly stabilized, mothballed and maintained for future use within the park in compliance with Plan policies. Staff recommends that the applicant commit to the protection, preservation and rehabilitation of these historic buildings as part of the development of a cultural resource management plan for the subject property.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff finds that the proposed use of the subject property as a regional park is consistent with the land use and rural economic policies of the Revised General Plan. However, staff has identified several issues relating to compatibility and the preservation of historic resources that require additional information and commitments from the applicant to ensure that proposed application complies with Plan policies.

Staff recommends the applicant commit to the following:

- Prohibition of the launching of motorized boats in conformance with Plan policies.
- Long-term maintenance and care of the vegetated landscape buffers on the perimeter of the subject property;
- Prohibition of Recreation Vehicles (RV) and/or large travel trailer camping on the subject property; and,
- Protection, preservation and rehabilitation of the Lloyd Fry House (also identified as the Colonel White House) and farm complex (VDHR 053-0012-0082) on the subject property and the development of a cultural resource management plan for the proposed park.

Staff recommends the following site design changes:

- Layout and design the proposed campgrounds, cabins and associated restroom facilities to respect and preserve the rural character and scenic quality of the subject property.

Staff finds that the application for a Commission Permit (CMPT) to establish a public park on the subject site is consistent with the land use and rural economic policies of the Revised General Plan. In addition the Capital Needs Assessment (CNA) for the western subareas of the County demonstrate a deficiency in regional and district parks; the proposed park on the subject property would assist the County in providing citizens with access to need open space and recreational amenities. Staff finds the general location and use of the subject property as a public park is consistent with the Revised General Plan and recommends approval of the Commission Permit.

Staff in reviewing the Special Exception requests has identified several issues that require additional information and commitments from the applicant to assure conformance with the performance standards and policies of the Revised General Plan. Staff cannot recommend approval of the Special Exception requests at this time.

Staff would be happy to meet with the applicant to discuss any comments or questions.

cc: Julie Pastor, AICP, Director, Planning
Cindy Keegan, AICP, Program Manager, Community Planning-via email